purview of VAT and if so, whether the canteens in Kerala has been exempted from VAT;

(b) how many State Governments sought the permission to exempt canteens from VAT and how many among them were given permission and whether the Government extend any compensations to make good the loss;

(c) whether the Government of Kerala sought sanction for exemption; and

(d) whether the Government consider to accord permission for exempting canteens of Kerala from VAT, the reaction of the Government thereto?

THE MINISTER OF DEFENCE (SHRI PRANAB MUKHERJEE): (a) to (d) The canteens in Kerala have not been exempted from Value Added Tax (VAT). VAT being a State subject, the Central Government has no role in according permission to State Governments to levy or exempt military canteens from VAT. However, on the Central Government's request, the Empowered Committee of State Finance Ministers set up to take decisions on all aspects of implementation of VAT, in its meeting on July 9, 2005, has decided that "The States/Union Territories may exempt CSD canteens from payment of VAT". It is now up to the individual State Government to exempt sale of goods through canteens from the levy of VAT.

De-mining in border areas

991. SHRI T.S. BAJWA: Will the Minister of DEFENCE be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that de-mining process in border areas is not completed properly;

(b) whether the land is handover to farmers after de-mining;

(c) if so, the details in this regard; and

(d) if not, the reasons therefor and the time by when the same is likely to be restored?

THE MINISTER OF DEFENCE (SHRI PRANAB MUKHERJEE): (a) De-mining operations for the mines laid during 'Op. Parakram' commenced in

November, 2002 and were conducted according to well rehearsed and established procedures. A small quantity of mines still remain unaccounted for due to prolonged deployment, mines drifting due to heavy rains, rodents shifting the mines and growth of dense vegetation around the area. For such unrecovered mines, precautionary measures are taken, like blasting of mines by mechanized equipment and issuing precautionary advice to landowners before handing over the land back to the owners.

(b) to (d) De-mining operations have been completed and land in all areas, except those required for operational reasons, have been handed back to the owners.

IT policy of HAL

992. SHRIMATI BIMBA RAIKAR: Will the Minister of DEFENCE be pleased to state:

(a) whether the Hindustan Aeronautics Ltd. has a well formulated IT policy in place;

(b) whether this policy covers crucial and sensitive aspects of threat perceptions and safety measures access to source codes, disaster recovery etc.; and

(c) the other measures being planned to strengthen the IT infrastructure of Hindustan Aeronautics Ltd.?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF DEFENCE (SHRI BIJOY KRISHNA HANDIQUE) (a) and (b) The Hindustan Aeronautics Limited (HAL) has formulated a Information Technology (IT) plan. The plan takes into account different aspects concerning with safety and security of the system.

(c) HAL reviews its requirements and takes appropriate measures to strengthen the IT infrastructure.

Setting up of plastic cards unit by BEL

993. SHRIMATI BIMBA RAIKAR: Will the Minister of DEFENCE be pleased to state:

(a) whether the Bharat Electronics Ltd. had tied up with a French company